

# Undergraduate Dissertation

## Trabajo Fin de Grado

### *The Shawshank Redemption's* Critique of the Penitentiary System: An Analysis of the Film's Main Characters

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## 1. Introduction

*The Shawshank Redemption*, a film written and directed by Frank Darabont and released in 1994, has been situated within the genre of prison films, a genre characterized by its featuring of convicted people as well as by the deprivation of freedom because of the criminal justice system (Kehrwald, 13-14). The genre initiated in the silent era with the film *The Big House* (George W. Hill, 1930), whose features were the model to follow for the prison films that were released later on. It has been an enduring genre ever since. Our curiosity to understand the unknown events that happen inside prison, together with our identification with the inmates and their search for self-redemption, are the reasons why our fascination with incarceration has survived throughout the years.

The 1990s were a crucial decade for prison films, as this was the time in which this genre became most popular. Due to the historical context of the 1990s, together with the media interventions, a number of laws were passed in 1994 by President Bill Clinton. Thus, these policy interventions resulted in the most sizable crime bill in the history of the United States, which developed the issue of mass incarceration. In this context, the release of *The Shawshank Redemption* in the same year contributed to the huge popularity of prison films. The movie follows the life of Andy Dufresne (Tim Robbins), an innocent man who is wrongly sentenced to two life terms after having been accused of killing his wife and her illicit lover. During the film, we get to know the relationships he establishes with the other inmates, such as Red (Morgan Freeman) and Brooks (James Whitmore), as well as with Warden Norton (Bob Gunton). *The Shawshank Redemption* revolves around the corruption of the prison system, which Andy and the other characters mentioned above will be subject to.

In this dissertation, following Policek's deprivation model, I will explore the impact the corrupted institution has on Andy, Red and Brooks, as well as the reasons why corruption influences each character in a different way. I will also comment on the way these characters respond to the prison's attempt at institutionalization and how their lives end.

## **2. The 1990s Prison Genre**

Prison films, as Kevin Kehrwald states, enjoy great popularity in the U.S. at the moment. However, it is hard to pinpoint when the first prison movie was released. Strictly speaking, the origins of the prison genre as we recognize it today date back to the silent era. The genre has been said to initiate during the Great Depression with the release of the film *The Big House*. This film initiated the cycle of prison films by giving rise to crucial innovations in the genre. According to Kehrwald, some characteristics that can be observed in contemporary prison films already appeared in *The Big House*, such as prison riots or the search for self-redemption in the clutches of an oppressive judicial system.

Now, almost a century after the release of the first prison movie, people continue to be as fascinated with incarceration as they were at that time. This popularity calls upon the following question: Why have prison films become such an enduring genre? Kevin Kehrwald gives three reasons in order to respond to this question. First of all, it was thought that the prison genre was for the viewers a paradoxical way of escapism from the unhappiness of their daily lives. In fact, the endurance of this genre goes beyond this concept. It is true that we have an understanding of other arms of justice,

such as the courtroom and the police. Nevertheless, we do not comprehend what happens behind the prison bars, as this reality is mostly unknown for the majority of people. The secrecy and inaccessibility to this sort of punishment nourish our curiosity. Film narratives are one of the few ways in which the punishment of crime can be made visible to the public.

Secondly, our intense interest in the prison genre is also based on our identification with an inmate. Prison films may be the only ones capable of creating a strong bond between the viewer and the prisoner. It is very interesting that we rarely identify with a guard or the warden in these films; we are normally asked to identify with the inmates, regardless of their guilt. This psychological identification results from the belief that, at some point in their lives, everyone is prone to be (more or less) morally corrupt. Prison movies put the audience in mental pain, as well as making our suffering focused, which “intensifies our sense of realism, anxiety and dread” (Kehrwald, 10).

Lastly, prison films are mainly about the prisoner’s survival at the hands of an oppressive system. On top of that, they are about the chance of finding personal redemption. The use of violence in prison films signifies a moment of freedom in prison. Convicts stir up empathy among viewers, as they have to confront everyday life issues. The amplification of these issues in prison film narratives make us more aware of our reactions not only to our own oppression but also to others’.

Kehrwald continues saying that prison films show specific features that belong uniquely to the prison genre. To begin with, even though the element of the prison is fundamental in this genre, a movie can continue being a prison movie even if various

scenes are not shot in a prison. The most significant characteristic that makes a film a prison film is the fact that incarceration and its effects outshine the rest of the aspects of the film. This is what happens in the film *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* (Mervyn LeRoy, 1932). Here, the character's imprisonment guides every narrative event that takes place in the outside world. Sometimes, despite the fact that characters serve their full sentence in prison, they also carry the consequences of it when they are set free. This befalls the protagonist in *Jailhouse Rock* (Richard Thorpe, 1957), whose present and future are determined by his incarceration, which influences everything from that point on. In some cases, prison films are not composed of a prison at all. Instead, they portray convicts on the run who cannot experience real freedom, as they have to try not to be captured. *The Defiant Ones* (Stanley Kramer, 1958) is an example of this definition, in which the prison bars become metaphorical.

Therefore, for a film to be qualified as a proper prison film, it must represent a convicted person, that is to say, a prisoner who has been prosecuted and condemned. We certainly know we are watching a prison film when liberty is lost because of the criminal justice system. As Kevin Kehrwald claims, "To qualify as a prison film, the prison should be the principal subject of investigation and the dominant agent of oppression" (14).

Prison films reached their peak of popularity in the 1990s. As Kehrwald continues saying, this was the result of purposeful policy interventions. In 1994, President Bill Clinton passed the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, thus developing into the most sizable crime bill in the history of the United States. In spite of the reduction of illegal acts that this decade certainly symbolized, new prisons were built

and additional police officers were hired. In addition to these new measures, the “three-strikes” law was passed, which established required life sentences for habitual offenders, along with the expansion of the number of crimes suitable to be punished with the death penalty. All this was possible due to the investments the bill generated, which also rose the problem of mass incarceration.

This growth of the prison population has brought in some controversy. As Sean O’Sullivan claims, it is believed that the media had a significant role in this development, due to the misrepresentations they reported of the inmate population. O’Sullivan believes that, as the public were not familiarized with this subject, they tended to believe the events the media described, this being a problematic aspect regarding the increase of the prison population. As a response to all this, a large quantity of prison films were released in this context.

There is a principle we need to take into account when speaking of prison and prisoners, which is “the process of prisonization” (Policek, 691). According to Nicoletta Policek, this process consists in the convicts’ adaptation to the prison environment, whereby prisoners have to adopt the prison’s “set of morals, laws, rules, social relations, pattern of behavior, and problems”. She continues explaining that two theoretical models have evolved from this process, which are the “deprivation” and “importation” models. On the one hand, the deprivation model estimates that certain characteristics of life behind bars have an impact on prisoners. Once inside the prison, individuals are deprived of essential needs, the lack of which generates behavioral changes in the inmates, known as “modes of response” (Policek, 692). In this way, they comply with a prison code, which basically helps the prisoners to survive inside prison. Therefore, the

deprivation model assumes that prison changes people. On the other hand, the importation model suggests that prison is simply an extension of society. This means that the convicts are already criminals before entering prison and that they only reflect the same attitudes inside it. As Nicoletta Policek states, “the prison characteristics, behaviors, and experiences are imported into the prison with the prisoner” (692).

*The Shawshank Redemption* is basically a critique of the penitentiary system of the time in which the film is set, that is, the 1950s. My argument here is that the film reflects Policek’s “deprivation model”. This idea will be supported by means of the close analysis of three of the film’s main characters: Brooks, Red and Andy.

### ***3. The Shawshank Redemption***

#### **3.1. Brooks’ Institutionalization and his Final Death**

Brooks Hatlen is a significant character in the movie due to the fact that he is the most veteran inmate in prison, as well as very liked by the others. As Yuan-yuan Peng claims, the analysis of Brooks can be divided into two defining parts: before his release from prison and after it (12). On the one hand, Brooks is a man who entered Shawshank in the early 1900s. Therefore, by watching the film we realize that he has been behind bars for more than forty years. Even though his crime is not revealed in the movie, he defines himself as “an old crook”. This gives us the impression that he is nearly rehabilitated because of his behavior inside. It can be observed that he is the only man in prison who owns a bird. According to Ashley Kannan, his bird Jake can be perceived as a symbol inside the prison that represents Brooks’ nurturing spirit whose growth



results in hope (n.p). We see that Brooks takes care of Jake since it is a baby bird. It lives in his pocket and survives thanks to food remains. Even Jake's voice shows how something weak can get strength with love. During the film, Brooks does not allow the prison brutality to have an influence on his bird, so Jake grows as a result of Brooks' dedication and affection. Consequently, as Kannan claims, Jake's development illustrates freedom, as it encourages and gives hope to the inmates. Even though it is in between freedom and confinement, as it is also in prison under the protection of Brooks, its eventual release shows how one day inmates will be set free from prison too.

Moreover, Brooks works at the prison library during his whole stay at Shawshank. He likes his job and is respected by every inmate. As Ana Ekaterine Iluridze states, "employment can engage a prisoner in a daily routine and create an opportunity for social interaction. Decent employment is a prerequisite for a prisoner to restore personal dignity, self-confidence, and self-efficacy" (n.p). Therefore, his feeling of being worthy and accepted contributes to his fulfillment, and consequently to his rehabilitation.

Nevertheless, our perception of his rehabilitation changes when we observe Brooks putting a knife on his friend's throat when he is about to be released after his 50-year sentence in prison. It is at this point that we realize that prison has not rehabilitated him. Instead, "he is institutionalized" (Peng 12). Even Brooks himself admits that he did it because "this was the only way to make them allow me to continue to stay in prison". Red also remarks that "Brooks has been completely institutionalized", thus letting the audience without any doubt about Brooks' institutionalization. In addition to this, Brooks' bird, which seemed to be free, appears dying in the prison playground a week later. It came back to where it once lived and finally died there. This proves that Jake,

the bird, was institutionalized, in the same way as Brooks was. Brooks spent most of his life in Shawshank, and so did the bird. This prison “cage” was their whole world.

On the other hand, as Yuan-yuan Peng claims, Brooks’ institutionalization continues after his release from prison. Everything he does or happens to him in the outside world indicates his institutionalization. To begin with, when he leaves Shawshank, we see him in a bus grasping his seat with a bleak and misplaced facial expression. We are able to see in this scene the other people on the transport, who appear to be really calm by the current circumstances. This picture of the other citizens strongly contrasts with that of Brooks, whose face shows us the feelings of uncertainty, chaos and the general distress that Brooks is confronted with when he is released. In this same scene, Brooks seems to grasp the bar of his seat with strength, thus meaning Brooks’ attempts to clutch his life in prison, as he is holding a metal bar like he would do with the prison bars. His hesitancy to separate himself from the metal bar is a sign of his future strains in the outside world. Then, there is a scene in which we can observe several pigeons and Brooks with them, who is distinctly upset and sad. In spite of his depressing look, he feels comfortable by feeding the pigeons. This moment in the film is yet another representation that reminds Brooks of Shawshank, and particularly his bird Jake. After this, a clear contrast is depicted in the movie between light and darkness. The birds are under the sunlight, whereas Brooks is sitting on a bench in the shade, thus comparing the freedom the pigeons have to Brooks’ impossibility to adjust himself to reality. His position in the dark shade portrays that his mind is still full of negativity, which is connected to his past life at Shawshank.

His total and complete institutionalization is also emphasized through the idea that he has spent so many years in prison that, when he is released, he is an old man who has

missed the introduction of modern and impressive new ways of life, as we can perceive when he is at a pedestrian crossing. The cars' noise is so unfamiliar to him that this scene portrays how strange the outside world is for Brooks now. He even comments on the fact that "when I was young, I had only seen one or two automobiles, but now they seem to be everywhere". According to Alisa Pescosolido and Christopher Medjesky, this comment is significant, since it shows "how much the world can change in one human lifetime" (n.p), and how Brooks' readjustment to life after spending most of his life in prison is far from easy.

These scenes in *The Shawshank Redemption* reflect that Brooks has been unable to adapt to society in the outside world. Yuan-yuan Peng remarks that "after being released from prison, Brooks was tormented by conflicts of values. At the same time, conflicts of habits resulting from institutionalization undermined his enthusiasm and desire for freedom. In confusion, he thoroughly broke down" (12). He continues stating that after taking into account the option of being sent back to prison, Brooks finally decided to commit suicide in order to remove his dread and anxiety. During his stay in Shawshank Prison, Brooks' desire to be free disappeared, as he thought that Shawshank was his whole life. Despite the fact that he was released from prison and was no longer under the prison officers' control, his soul always belonged to Shawshank. He could not eliminate this mark from his soul, which prevented him from his integration into life outside prison. As he did not know how to live in liberty, he finally ended his life with a rope. However, as Tanya Glover claims, before committing suicide, he left a sign sculpted in the wooden support above him saying "Brooks was here" (n.p). This means that despite the fact that he was not ready to live in the outside world, she affirms that "he wanted someone to know that he had been there, that he had lived and was once a

human being” (n.p). Even though the free world was not the Shawshank State Prison, it was another prison to him. This was due to the fact that he had to go through another institutionalization process. As Yuan-yuan Peng concludes, “finally, he commits suicide in order to escape both the outside world and the prison. It is a tragedy resulting from institutionalization” (12). Brooks Hatlen is a clear example of Policek’s deprivation model. Even though Brooks seems to change in a positive way, it eventually turns out to be negative. In order to survive in Shawshank, he complies with a set of norms which, once outside, are difficult for him to eliminate.

### **3.2. Red’s Institutionalization and his Final Escape**

Ellis Boyd Redding, most known as Red, is also an older prisoner in *The Shawshank Redemption*. He appears to be fully rehabilitated because of the years he has been in prison and because of his good behavior. The movie’s prison system uses Red as an example of rehabilitation. However, is he so rehabilitated as the movie wants us to think? Red also follows Policek’s deprivation model, since his situation is similar to that of Brooks. Yuan-yuan Peng proposes some aspects that lead us to think he is also institutionalized. To begin with, his attitude towards conditional releases shows that he has adjusted to prison life. We can perceive throughout the film that Red has three parole hearings, the first one taking place after twenty years of having been imprisoned and the second one ten years later. In these parole hearings, he says what he thinks the board wants to hear. He seems to be rehabilitated, as he pronounces the correct words in order to be released. But the truth is that he does not know what the word “rehabilitated” means. It is not until the third parole hearing that he changes his speech. In this case, Red accepts the fact that he will never be released. He now chooses the

option of saying that he regrets committing that crime instead of continue telling the board what he is supposed to say. CE Jeffrey comments that “Red becomes defined first and foremost by his lack of hope that, even if justice did occur in Shawshank, it would never be afforded to a man guilty of a crime that he can’t even forgive himself for” (n.p). He insists on the idea that in Shawshank there is no place for hope, thus leading to his thought of being forced to live in prison. According to Yuan-yuan Peng, Red was aware of the fact that his request to be released was always going to be rejected. As a result of this, asking for a conditional release became “a mechanical behavior” (12). Therefore, he began to eliminate the thought of being free one day, as this idea was no longer important to him.

Secondly, Red does not have thoughts and behaviors related to the breaking of rules, thus being a sign of him being institutionalized. This is portrayed in the film in several scenes. Yuan-yuan Peng states that the rock hammer Andy asks Red for is the first indication of Red’s institutionalization (12). The hammer means freedom for Andy. Yet, Red suggests that it is a bad idea to dig a tunnel with a hammer, as it would take him so much time. He finally advises Andy to be realistic. This is a clear example of Red’s institutionalization. Hope is a significant term when it comes to the characters of Red and Andy. Whereas Andy relies on it, the lack of hope is clearly embodied by Red throughout the whole film. As Luc Bovens claims, “the tension concerning the value of hope comes out most poignantly when Andy and Red discuss the value of music inside the walls of the Shawshank prison” (2). Red stops playing the harmonica, since he thinks that “it does not make much sense”. When Andy tells him that music is essential inside prison, he pretends to understand him and then he says: “let me tell you something: hope is a dangerous thing, hope can drive a man insane, has got no use on

the inside, better get used to that idea”. Music and hope are related here. However, both seem to be useless for Red. Finally, when Andy tells Red about his plans to go to Mexico and invites him, Red replies: “I don’t think that you ought to be doing this to yourself. It’s a shitty pipe dream. Mexico is down there and I am in here”. Red also reminds Andy that they were both imprisoned. In addition to this, Red adds that he had become another person, due to all the years he had been living in prison. He compares himself to Brooks. He thinks he will never be able to do anything on the outside, as he had spent most of his life in prison. According to Yuan-yuan Peng, “both Red's thoughts and behaviors had been institutionalized by the prison” (12). This is the reason why he was not brave enough to consider doing something on the outside world. Even Red himself admits his institutionalization. Paul R. Peluso, Gerald J. Mozdzierz and Joseph Lisiecki comment that when Andy asks Red if he thinks that he will be paroled, Red answers: “Jesus, Andy. I couldn’t hack it on the outside. Been in here too long. I’m an institutional man now” (177). He then describes his personal experience to show how the fact of being in prison for decades institutionalizes a person: “These walls are funny. First you hate them, then you get used to them. After long enough, you get so you depend on them. That’s institutionalized”. They continue saying that “Red’s life in prison has defined who he is” (177). Red also remarks: “In here I’m the guy who can get it for you. Out there, all you need are yellow pages. I wouldn’t know where to begin”, thus portraying his sense of surrender and hopelessness that is confirmed by his surprise at being granted parole.

As Brooks, Red’s institutionalization continues after his release from prison, which is depicted through his behavior. When he is free, he does not have that feeling of comfort he used to have in prison. After assimilating a new view of himself and the

world from an inmate's perspective, facing the outside world is a challenge for him. This changed world leaves him disoriented and emotionally exhausted (Paul R. Peluso et al. 1977). This aspect can be illustrated through his new job as a grocery clerk. While packing food in bags, he asks his boss in a nervous tone if he can use the bathroom, a question to which the manager angrily responds: "Yes, you don't have to ask for permission every time!". Red, ashamed and dissatisfied, narrates: "There is a truth harsh to face. No way I'm gonna make it out on the outside... Thirty years I've been asking for permission to piss. I can't squeeze a drop without say-so". He also admits: "All I do anymore is think of ways to break my parole... All I want is to be back where things make sense. Where I won't have to be afraid all the time". For Red, living in fear is the worst thing that can happen to someone. When he was in Shawshank, Red had a sense of safety, anticipation and personality. He was confident enough to know what the rules and limits were, and what was expected from prisoners. Moreover, he was aware of how to use the system in order to move materials inside the prison, together with the understanding of how to avoid trouble with guards and inmates. As there was no instructions manual, this was "knowing it without knowing it" (Paul R. Peluso et al., 1977), meaning that even though in prison they do not teach you any rules, you know what you have and do not have to do. Paul R. Peluso et al. also state that "Red was following a blueprint for life". We can observe that after having been released from prison, Red follows Brooks' steps: he has the same job, the same room and the same feelings, as both were afraid and wanted to return to Shawshank. He even left a mark next to that of Brooks saying: "so was Red". The movie shows us that both characters are doomed to have the same fate, this being related to Policek's deprivation model. Living so many years according to the prison's conditions make one lose their freedom

and not recovering it on the outside world. This is what happened to Brooks and Red. However, their endings are very different. If Red does not end up in the same way as Brooks is thanks to Andy.

Finally, Red wants to get over his institutionalization. Even though the movie represents him as a hopeless man inside the prison, at the end he seems to have hope, which is encouraged by Andy's letter to him. When Red finds it, he decides to fulfil the promise he made to Andy about going to Mexico. After general adversities, he chooses with bravery to go to Zihuatanejo to find Andy and stay there with him. According to Yuan-yuan Peng, in spite of the fact that Red was fortunate not to commit suicide, which was Brooks' destiny, his fight against institutionalization was laborious. He concludes that "it is tough for anyone to get rid of institutionalization once he or she is institutionalized" (12-13). It is true that Red is hopeful at the end and avoids death. However, we do not get the feeling that Red is fully redeemed. He goes to the Mexican island to reunite with Andy, thus escaping society. Rehabilitation means being able to live in society, that is why prisoners are released, but Red escapes from everything to go Zihuatanejo, which is portrayed as a paradisiacal beach untouched by civilization. Therefore, even though he tries to get rid of institutionalization, he does not manage to do so. He is and will be an institutionalized man because of the years he has spent in prison. There seems to be no reintegration in society for him even though he tries. His ending can be compared to that of Brooks. In this case, Red does not die, but he does not manage to stay in society, the same that happened to Brooks.



### **3.3. Andy and the Corrupted Prison System**

Andy Dufresne is sentenced to Shawshank Prison after having been wrongly accused of killing his wife and her lover. This is the reason why his attitude in prison is different to that of Brooks and Red. They were guilty whereas Andy is innocent. However, he also suffers the process of institutionalization, as he becomes a corrupted man in prison in order to escape. Therefore, his institutionalization is different from that of the characters mentioned above. Hari Sankar mentions that “Andy Dufresne goes through the process of prisonization not just to accommodate himself in the prison but more importantly to liberate himself from the prison” (291). Therefore, we have here a different example of Policek’s deprivation model.

Andy enters being innocent, but in prison he becomes an immoral person due to the corruption of the justice system. Corruption can be seen before Andy enters prison and inside it. Thus, the film criticizes law and the prison system (Limanta, 82). Andy seems to comply with the institution’s rules. Instead of crying once he enters prison, as Red bets he will, it looks like he decides to obey the rules and conditions of the prison system. As Limanta suggests, “the domination of the corrupt and hypocrite prison guards or abuse in law system is very strong” (82). This is firstly reflected at the beginning of the film when the court trial wrongly sentences Andy. Even though evidence is needed in order to condemn someone, Andy is defenseless. Therefore, the arguments given in court against him seem more logical and outweigh the lack of evidence. In spite of the fact that Andy is innocent, he is still condemned to two life sentences. After nineteen years of Andy’s imprisonment, a new inmate, whose name is Tommy (Gil Bellows), enters Shawshank and tells Andy that he knows the man who assassinated his wife and her lover. He also asserts that he is proud that the authorities

have not caught him. Andy then talks to Warden Norton to ask for a retrial to prove that he is innocent, as Andy only wanted to do justice. It is in this moment when the warden's corruption is confirmed. There are two reasons why Norton needs to retain Andy in prison for the rest of his life (Limanta, 82). On the one hand, he does not want to be deprived of Andy's assistance in making illegal reports about his levy. On the other hand, he was scared that with Andy's release, he would divulge his infractions of not paying taxes and of accepting bribery. These are the reasons why the warden conceals the truth about the real murderer of Andy's wife. Warden Norton even orders Tommy's death and invents a story to cover it. Moreover, when Andy mentions "laundering the tax money" (Limanta, 83), he sends Andy to solitary confinement for a month. According to Limanta, these examples show how the prison system has the power to abuse and that, "it is so deeply ingrained that it can determine people's behavior and life" (82).

Despite the system's corruption, Tony Magistrale (2010) claims that Andy "undermines the corrupt authorities that run the prison" (66). Andy has reasons to be skeptical and resentful, since the judiciary system failed him in a terrible manner. However, he forgets about his anger and hopelessness and carries out his plan. He finally escapes prison in such a conscious way that is skillful enough to steal the money that he had been financing for Warden Norton. Actually, he represents a morally right behavior when he sends proof "of the warden's illegal moneymaking operations to the Portland newspaper" (Magistrale 2003, 133).

Andy undergoes a change, since he enters being innocent and escapes being a corrupted person due to the attempt of institutionalization the prison system tried to impose on him, in the same way they did to Brooks and Red. Andy robs and tricks the

guards, thus doing something morally reprehensible he probably would not have imagined he would do before entering prison. However, the motive of his “corruption” is presented as licit by the film, since he wants to escape the place he has been unjustly sent to. Thus, unlike the unfair judiciary system and the corrupted prison guards, his deeds are presented as morally right. Even though Andy tries to make justice by liberating himself, in a way, he needs to play by the corrupted prison’s rules.

In order to avoid the prison system’s manipulation, Andy chooses to have an optimistic viewpoint. Hope is the word that most characterizes Andy. He is not only an optimistic man but also spreads hope among the inmates. Andy is different from the beginning, due to the fact that he is innocent. Furthermore, his believe in hope also makes him a distinctive character. The majority of prisoners with life sentences have an expression of desperation on their faces. However, Andy always preserves a smile (Peng, 13). There is even a moment when he says: ”Do not forget that there are places in the world that are not made up of stone, there is something inside that they cannot get to, that is hope. Hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things, and no good thing ever dies.” According to Jeff Saporito, Andy’s words show that he retains hope thanks to the tunnel he is digging in his cell and to Rita Hayworth’s poster, which he uses to hide the tunnel and, thus, his dream (n.p). He is different from the other inmates, since hope is what differentiates him from the rest. Hope makes Andy focused and prevents him from falling into sadness. For Andy, you can never become a prisoner if you always maintain hope alive. As Andy never considers himself a prisoner, he, unlike Brooks and Red, remains hopeful. When he is put in solitary confinement, he takes music as a refuge in order to survive in the hole, thus stating: “that’s the beauty of music. They can’t get that from you.” Escaping from prison not only means being physically outside prison, but

also “maintaining his self-worth through commitment to the pursuit of his freedom” (Saporito n.p). This is Andy’s determination, as he knows he is not guilty. His believe in hope is so strong that he does not allow it to become something abstract. Instead, as Jeff Saporito comments, “he makes it literal” by carving that tunnel every day. His purpose is to preserve his compassion, together with his composure and autonomy, thus not permitting the prison system to deprive him of these features (n.p). He shows that the institution will not be able to control him. This is what differentiates Andy from Red and Brooks. Whereas hope is a dangerous thing for Red and for many others, for Andy, it is something to hold on to in prison (Aftavianin, 3). However, Andy’s adjustment to prison is in great part thanks to his friendship with Red. Even though Andy is the hopeful one, both characters complement each other. According to Luc Bovens, Andy’s hope is related to his inner strength. He claims that Andy never assumes “a prison mentality” (669), and that is why Red admires him so much. Andy brings “a sense of his own worth, or maybe it was only a sense of freedom... a kind of inner light he carried around him” (Bovens, 669). Instead of letting his inner hope vanish during the twenty years he stays in prison, he always remains optimistic.

From the very beginning, and for the reasons explained above, Andy is different from the other inmates, but he is also an example of Policzek’s deprivation model. He changes inside prison as a consequence of the prison’s corruption. Even though he does it with the purpose of escaping his unfair imprisonment, he becomes “corrupted” in a way. By means of Andy’s evolution, the film shows the effect that the prison system has on the different characters.

#### 4. Conclusion

The analysis of *The Shawshank Redemption* serves to enlighten the way in which the film's prison system uses corruption to manipulate and then institutionalize the main characters: Brooks, Red and Andy. The three of them are a clear representation of Policek's deprivation model, since prison changes all of them, even if in different ways.

Brooks and Red become institutionalized inside prison, as they cannot survive in the outside world. They are so accustomed to the prison's rules that they do not know how to live once they are set free. In the case of Brooks, his work as librarian and his enthusiasm for nurturing his bird Jake seem to be proof of Brooks' rehabilitation. However, we can see how he ends up committing suicide. After fifty years in prison, he could not survive on the outside, as the world had completely changed for him. The same happens with Red. In prison, he already shows his institutionalization in an indirect way. He does not want to break the prison's rules, and he does not have hope. He even says that he does not know what the world "rehabilitated" means. On the outside, he follows Brooks' steps: he has the same job, the same room, and even makes the same carving. The difference between Red and Brooks is that Red does not kill himself at the end. Thanks to Andy and his hope, he escapes with him to Zihuatanejo, a paradisiacal Mexican island. However, both Brooks and Red portray signs of institutionalization. Whereas in the case of Brooks this is very clear, Red's case may be confusing. However, the fact that he escapes with Andy represents that he is not able to live in society anymore. Thus, he depicts his institutionalization in this way.

On the contrary, Andy is a different example of Policek's deprivation model. He, unlike Red and Brooks, enters Shawshank being innocent, but he is wrongly sentenced to two life terms. Even though he may seem an inmate just like the others, he is depicted

as a hopeful man. Hope is something that the rest of the prisoners do not have. Therefore, hope in prison is a significant element. Challenging Warden Norton and the institution itself, Andy robs and tricks them. Even though his acts are represented as being morally right, since he is fighting against an unfair system, he undergoes a change inside prison. The morally reprehensible things he does are the ones he did not think he would do. In spite of the fact that he behaves in that way in order to escape from Shawshank, he becomes another person in the process.

The *Shawshank Redemption* shows prison in a rather negative way. We can see throughout the whole movie the prison system's corruption and its manipulation of the characters in order to institutionalize them. Not even a single character is represented as rehabilitated at the end of the film, in fact, it is totally the opposite. Thus, the film clearly portrays a critique of the penitentiary system of the 1950s that can be implicitly extended to the 1990s context of mass incarceration in which the film was released.

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